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ABSTRACT

Subjects were angered or not angered during a bogus experimental task following which their assistance was solicited. Consistent with derivations from Rawling's concept of Anticipatory Guilt, the results indicated that anger facilitated helping only when the lone bystander's anger was directed toward the victim of an emergency. However, anger tended to inhibit helping when: (1) anger was directed toward someone other than the victim of an emergency; (2) anger was directed toward the solicitor of a mere favor; and (3) the angered bystander was in the presence of a non-angered negative model while the anger instigating victim was in need of emergency assistance. (Author)

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The Effects of Anger on Helping Behavior

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Introduction

Numerous experiments in Social Psychology have examined altruistic or aggressive behaviors. The focus of the present research deals with the question: What is the likelihood of an angered person offering assistance to his anger instigator? The unexpected results of a preliminary study by the present authors indicated that angered bystanders witnessing an emergency helped an anger instigating victim faster than non-angered bystanders. This finding suggested a number of factors to be considered in the present study as well as the possible utility of a particular theoretical concept, i.e., Rawlings' concept of anticipatory guilt. Rawlings, briefly defines anticipatory guilt as "a particular type of discomfort aroused by the anticipation of violating an internal standard of 'right or wrong' conduct" (1972). Applying this concept to the present problem we might assume that when a bystander has a neutral attitude toward the victim of an emergency he may fail to intervene and yet escape self-devaluation or guilt for this inaction by rationalizing that perhaps help isn't really needed, or other bystanders, who are perhaps even more capable than himself, will intervene. However, when the bystander has moderate levels of malice toward the victim his ability to remain inactive and to escape discomfort may be more limited. Here, redefining the seriousness of the emergency or diffusing responsibility might be perceived by the moderately angered bystander

as a thinly disguised, vindictive attempt to perpetuate the victim's suffering beyond an amount that would be equitable.

Therefore, moderately angered bystanders to an emergency would, according to the anticipatory guilt model, be expected to help the anger instigator faster than non-angered bystanders. According to this model however, helping would not be facilitated if the bystander was moderately angry, but at someone other than the victim of the emergency.

However, if an anger instigating victim is in need merely of a favor, such as change for a quarter, rather than in need of relief from a serious physical injury, a moderately angered bystander's reluctance to help may not arouse such high levels of anticipated discomfort. Here, the consequences to the anger instigating victim resulting from the bystander's failure to extend a favor may not be recognized as disproportionately severe and perhaps would be perceived as a just retaliatory gesture. Therefore, when non-emergency caliber help is solicited a moderately angered bystander would be expected to help anger instigating victims slower or less frequently than he would help non-anger instigating victims.

In addition, if a bystander with a moderate level of anger toward the victim of an emergency witnesses a non-angered fellow bystander's refusal to help, the angered bystander may find it easier to rationalize his own failure to intervene. Since anger could not be considered the cause of the other bystander's failure to intervene, the angered bystander could then attribute his own reluctance to help to some reason other than anger or vindictiveness. Thus, in the presence of a negative model, anger toward the victim of an emergency would be expected to inhibit helping.

The present study was designed primarily to assess the interactive effects of anger on helping behavior.

Method

Subjects: Following review and approval by Department and University Committees on the use of human subjects, seventy males (10 per condition) were selected randomly from Introductory Psychology classes at the University of Delaware.

Procedure: Each S, along with two male confederates (A & B) of the Experimenter participated in what was described as a sensory motor learning skills experiment. In lieu of E's physical presence instructions were tape recorded, supposedly to prevent experimenter bias. The tape provided detailed instructions for conducting the session as well as for receiving subject participation credit. The tape instructed, "Given that an experimenter is not physically present during this study, some subjects may take this opportunity to be lackidaisical and not really try their best during the experiment. Therefore, unlike other experiments you might have participated in, we do not simply award subject participation credit merely for showing up at the laboratory. In this study participation credit is given only if the other 2 students participating with you, sign your subject participation credit form attesting to the fact that during the experiment you at least tried--not that you did a great job, but that at least you tried."

During the next 30 minutes subjects participated in a sensory motor learning task which required equal amounts of participation from the S, Confederate A and Confederate B.

Following the experimental task the tape instructed the participants to exchange subject participation credit forms in a tone which suggested that this was to be merely a perfunctory exercise. In the Angered condition, however, Confederate A having secured the signatures of the S and Confederate B, refused to sign the subject's participation credit form stating that he didn't think the S tried and that he was sick and tired of people trying to get something for nothing. Confederate B never intervened in behalfof either party and remained neutral throughout. In the non-angered condition Confederate A signed the Ss form without comment or hassel.

The tape then instructed all participants to complete a post-experimental questionnaire which among other items asked Ss' to rate on a seven point scale how much they enjoyed working with person A and also person B (1=very much; 7=not at all) which served as a check on the anger manipulation. Following the Ss completion of the questionnaire he was free to leave the laboratory upon which he encountered one of the help soliciting situations in the corridor of the building.

1. Emergency Alone Situations: Here Confederates A and B already departed the laboratory (the victim-to-be leaving second) leaving the subject alone to finish his questionnaire. Upon entering the hall the S encountered Confederate A (the anger instigator in Angered conditions) 7 yards from the door slumping near a ladder, clutching his head and moaning, "Oh, my head....my head." Boxes and papers that had been on the ladder when everyone first entered the laboratory were now scattered on the floor. Angered and non-angered Ss were exposed to Confederate A's emergency. In addition an Angered: Other injured condition permitted

subjects angered by Confederate A to enter the hall to find Confederate B, in the standard emergency position.

2. Non-Emergency Alone Situation: In this condition the taped instructions mentioned that Ss would be paid a small token sum for their participation in the study. A and B received quarters while the S received payment in dimes and nickles. Upon entering the hall alone, angered or non-angered subjects encountered Confederate A who approached the S with a quarter in hand saying, "You wouldn't have change for a quarter would you? I have to make a phone call."

3. Emergency Negative Model Situation: Here, Confederate B remained with angered or non-angered subjects following Confederate A's departure from the laboratory. Upon encountering the emergency together Confederate B said to the S, "he's hurt....I'm cutting out," after which B exited via a nearby stairwell.

Dependent Measure of Helping: In the emergency conditions the latency of a helpful gesture or verbalization was recorded from the time the S opened the door to the hall. In the non-emergency condition the latency was recorded following the request for change for a quarter until the S's hand emerged from his pocket with the change. Following the help soliciting situations all Ss were completely debriefed.

Results and Discussion

On the questionnaire completed prior to encountering the helping situation, angered S's ratings of how much they enjoyed working with Confederate A (1=very much; 7=not at all) were significantly ($p<.0001$) more negative ($\bar{X}=5.35$) than non-angered Ss ($\bar{X}=3.37$). However, the ratings

of Confederate B for angered and non-angered Ss were 2.87 and 3.33, respectively (p=n.s.).

Given the small number of Ss assigned to each condition it seemed reasonable that the latency measure proved to be a more sensitive indicator than a strict frequency measure. However, to obtain a latency score for those few Ss who did not intervene at all but instead proceeded to leave the scene (before being intercepted), a score of one second longer than the longest latency for Ss who intervened during the emergency (or gave change) was assigned. This procedure did not change the basic pattern of findings obtained with only Ss who intervened. A log e transformation then satisfied the homogenity of variance assumption.

A one-way ANOVA for all seven conditions revealed a significant treatment effect significant at the .01 level.

In the three Emergency Alone Conditions only, ANOVA revealed a treatment effect between Anger, No Anger, and Anger: Other Injured Conditions ($f=7.75$, $p<.002$). As depicted in Table 1, when emergency help is needed and the bystander is alone Ss angered by the victim helped faster than non-angered Ss ($p<.05$), and also faster than Ss angered by someone other than the victim ($p<.001$). These findings are consistent with the anticipatory guilt model.

Furthermore, as expected on the basis of the anticipatory guilt model the difference between non-angered Ss and those angered by someone other than the victim was not statistically significant.

Insert Table 1 about here

In the Non-Emergency Help (i.e., change for a quarter) conditions angered Ss helped the anger instigating victim somewhat slower than non-angered Ss, but not by an amount that was statistically significant. However, a 2 x 2 ANOVA comparing the latencies for Ss angered by the victim and non-angered Ss across the Emergency Alone and Non-Emergency Conditions revealed a statistically significant interaction effect ($f=4.36$, $p<.05$). The interaction indicated that in an emergency, anger toward the victim facilitated helping relative to the not quite significant inhibitory effect of anger in the non-emergency change for a quarter conditions. Although the findings could have been stronger, the general pattern is roughly consistent with derivations from the anticipatory guilt model presented earlier.

Similarly, in the presence of a negative model during an emergency, angered Ss helped anger instigating victims somewhat slower than non-angered Ss, but not by an amount that was statistically significant. However, a 2 x 2 ANOVA comparing the latencies for Ss angered at the victim and non-angered Ss witnessing an emergency, either alone or in the presence of a Negative Model also yielded a statistically significant interaction effect. Consistent, roughly, with the anticipatory guilt model, this interaction indicated that anger directed toward the victim of an emergency facilitates helping when the bystander is alone, whereas anger toward the victim has a slight, but not quite significant, inhibitory effect on helping in the presence of a negative model.

Taken together the overall findings of this study, with some degree of equivocation, generally support the tenability of the anticipatory guilt model for dealing with the question of the effects of anger on helping behavior.

More recently we have attempted further tests of the Anticipatory Guilt model which have by and large failed to support predictions derived from this model.

First: Ss high on hostility guilt (as measured by Mosher's Hostility Guilt scale) did not respond faster to the needs of anger instigators than Ss low on hostility guilt.

Second: In other experiments in which we varied the ambiguity of the emergency and also the saliency or visability of the victim, we observed that when anger did facilitate helping behavior, it did so without regard for whether the victim was the anger instigator or some "innocent" observer. This latter finding has pushed our thinking in the direction of Zillman and Hokanson. Currently, we are attempting to distinguish the effects of anger and arousal on helping behavior.

References

Macualay, J. & Berkowitz, L. (Eds.). Altruism and helping behavior: Social psychological studies of some antecedents and consequences. New York: Academic Press, 1970.

Table 1

The Effects of Anger on Helping Behavior

	Emergency: Alone			Non-Emergency (Change for Quarter)		Emergency: Neg. Model	
	Anger	Non-Anger	Anger Other Injured	Anger	Non-Anger	Anger	Non-Anger
Help	10	8	6	8	9	8	10
No Help	0	2	4	2	1	2	0
Latency* (Sec.)	5.90	18.31	30.54	12.45	9.29	19.40	14.25

*Latency is given in seconds, with times for Ss who failed to help added.